



U.S. Department of the Interior Water Acquisition Program

Frequently Asked Questions



November 2003

1. WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR IMPLEMENTING THE WAP? WHAT ARE THE OBJECTIVES OF THE WATER ACQUISITION PROGRAM (WAP)?

Under the authority of the Central Valley Project Improvement Act (CVPIA), the Water Acquisition Program (WAP) is a joint U.S. Department of the Interior (Interior) program of the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS).

The WAP acquires water for protecting restoring, and enhancing fish and wildlife populations to meet the goals of the CVPIA. The WAP acquires water to meet two purposes: (1) Level 4 refuge water supplies, and (2) instream flows.

2. WHAT ARE LEVEL 4 WATER SUPPLIES?

CVPIA requires Interior to acquire water supplies, known as incremental Level 4, to meet optimal waterfowl habitat management needs at identified wildlife areas in the California Central Valley. Incremental Level 4 is defined as the difference between historic annual average water deliveries (Level 2) and water supplies needed to achieve optimal waterfowl habitat management (Level 4).

Refuges To Receive Level 4 Water Supplies

Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge
Delevan National Wildlife Refuge
Sutter National Wildlife Refuge
San Luis National Wildlife Refuge
Merced National Wildlife Refuge
Kern National Wildlife Refuge
Pixley National Wildlife Refuge
Gray Lodge Wildlife Area
North Grasslands Wildlife Area
Volta Wildlife Area
Los Banos Wildlife Area
Mendota Wildlife Area
Grasslands Resource Conservation
District

3. WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN AFRP AND WAP?

Under CVPIA, an Anadromous Fish Restoration Program (AFRP) has been developed to make all reasonable efforts to double the natural production of anadromous fish in Central Valley streams and rivers. Anadromous fish are those fish which live in the ocean and return to rivers to reproduce. The WAP supports the objectives of the AFRP by acquiring water from willing sellers. As a part of CVPIA long-range planning efforts to increase stream flows, FWS is currently conducting ongoing studies related to three key issues: biological needs of anadromous fish, hydrological characteristics of targeted streams (including reservoir operations), and economic considerations. This information will be used to establish which streams have the highest

priority need for additional flows and how much water is needed on each of those streams.

4. WHAT FISH AND WILDLIFE NEEDS WILL BE MET THROUGH THE WAP?

Water acquired to meet incremental Level 4 refuge water supplies will provide optimal water supplies for Central Valley wildlife refuges and wetland management areas. This water will be used to restore

permanent wetlands and summer water areas, and provide for earlier flooding of seasonal wetlands to maximize habitat for migrating waterfowl. Typically in the past, these areas have been drained or have not been supplied with water on a year-round basis. The increase in habitat resulting from the additional water supplies will decrease waterfowl overcrowding and reduce waterfowl diseases at the refuges. Additional water supplies also increase populations of some threatened and endangered fish and wildlife species as a result of improved wetland habitats.

The water acquired to increase stream flows will contribute to meeting the goal of the AFRP to increase populations of anadromous fish species. The targeted species include chinook salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*); steelhead (*O. mykiss*); striped bass (*Morone saxatilis*); American shad (*Alosa sapidissima*); white sturgeon (*Acipenser transmontanus*); and green sturgeon (*A. Medirostris*). The reproductive success of these fish will increase by providing greater access to historical spawning areas and by improving water temperatures for spawning. Additional flows will also contribute to an increase in survival of juvenile anadromous fish passing through the Delta on their way to the ocean.

5. HOW MUCH WATER HAS BEEN ACQUIRED UNDER THE WAP TO DATE? WHAT PRICE WAS PAID FOR THE WATER?

Water acquired between water years 1994 and 2003 is summarized below. A detailed list of water acquisitions can be found on the WAP website at www.usbr.gov/mp/cvpia/wap or can be requested by calling 1-800-742-9474 and entering 26.

Water Year	Annual Level 4 Acquisitions (acre-feet)	Other Water Acquisitions (acre-feet)	Total Water Acquired (acre-feet)	Price Range (per acre-foot)
2003 (To Date)	70,000	79,026	149,026	\$60 - \$130
2002	85,390	68,105	153,495	\$60 - \$120
2001	63,005	109,785	172,790	\$60 - \$150
2000	67,748	108,880	176,628	\$60 - \$125
1999	43,618	224,498	268,116	\$25 - \$65
1998	6,300	80,000	86,300	\$15 - \$700
1997	69,800	155,983	225,783	\$15 - \$70
1996	36,395	16,161	52,556	\$25 - \$50
1995	88,009	0	88,009	\$25 - \$36
1994	29,415	76,441	105,856	\$24 - \$50
Total	559,680	918,879	1,478,559	\$15 - \$150

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6. HOW IS THE WAP FUNDED?

The WAP is funded through the Central Valley Project Restoration Fund (Restoration Fund) and Energy and Water Appropriations. CVPIA established the Restoration Fund, which obtains revenues from fees paid by CVP water and power contractors. The Restoration Fund can also accept donated funds from any source. Proposition 204 (Safe, Clean Reliable Water Supply Act) funds are also available to meet the State's share of costs under CVPIA. In addition, CALFED funding may be available for water acquisitions that meet CALFED objectives.

7. WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE WAP TO OTHER WATER ACQUISITION PROGRAMS?

Other active or planned water acquisition programs include the Environmental Water Program (EWP), Environmental Water Account (EWA), and the State's Water Drought Planning Program. EWP and EWA are part of the CALFED Bay-Delta Program. CALFED is a cooperative effort involving State and Federal agencies with management and regulatory responsibilities in the San Francisco Bay/Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Estuary (the Bay-Delta). CALFED provides a long-term solution to problems affecting the Bay-Delta by addressing four main areas: ecosystem quality, water quality, water supply reliability, and water system vulnerability. The State's Drought Planning Program is a State program that is intended to address immediate water shortage problems in California until the CALFED long-term solution for water supply reliability is in place. Below is additional information on each of these water acquisition programs.

- ◆ EWP is a CALFED effort developed to implement the flow-related elements of its Ecosystem Restoration Program Plan (ERPP). The EWP is in initial development and is being formulated with the assistance of a Steering Committee composed of stakeholders. Through the EWP, the CALFED agencies will help achieve ERPP upstream flow-related objectives by purchasing up to 100,000 acre feet of water per year by the end of Stage 1 of CALFED implementation (2000-2007).

The EWP has similar goals to the CVPIA program for acquiring instream flows currently implemented by the WAP. Both programs are intended to increase streamflows in Central Valley streams for environmental purposes. Due to the similarities between the CVPIA program to acquire instream flows and the EWP, there are significant benefits in coordinating these two programs. A WAP (CVPIA)/EWP (CALFED) coordination plan is being developed to describe where, when, and how the two programs can and should act in partnership. For further information on the EWP, visit the EWP website at www.calfedewp.org or contact Terry Mills at tmills@water.ca.gov or 916/651-6478.

- ◆ EWA is a CALFED program developed to provide increased water supply reliability to water users while at the same time assuring the availability of sufficient water to meet fishery protection, restoration, and recovery needs. The EWA, a component of CALFED's Water Management Strategy, allows environmental managers to use assets, including water and money, to provide greater flexibility in helping with fish species recovery. Water is acquired through purchases from willing sellers and through operational modifications or improvements. EWA is a cooperative program where CALFED agencies acquire, bank, transfer, and borrow water and arrange for its conveyance when needed for the protection and recovery of fish.

To avoid competition and to increase efficiency, the WAP is working closely with the EWA. Where possible, water will be acquired to meet objectives of both programs. For further information on EWA visit the EWA website at <http://calfed.ca.gov/programs/ewa/ewa.htm> or contact Jerry Johns at jjohns@water.ca.gov or (916) 651-7051.

- ◆ The Governor's Advisory Drought Planning Panel has recommended creation of a statewide Drought Planning Program that would provide water to areas suffering critical shortages. This program would be implemented by the State Department of Water Resources (DWR) and would build upon the experience gained with the Governor's Drought Water Bank. The program would use available resources (e.g., water transfers, water exchanges, groundwater programs, and local partnerships) to minimize critical water shortages. Preliminary information about the State's Drought Planning Program can be found on the DWR website at www.dwr.water.ca.gov or by contacting Jeanine Jones at jeanine@water.ca.gov or 916/651-8136.

8. FROM WHOM IS THE WAP BUYING WATER? HOW DO YOU DETERMINE THE PURCHASE PRICE?

The WAP purchases water from “willing sellers” which can be water districts, irrigation districts, counties or other entities that hold water rights and are willing to transfer or sell their water rights to Interior. The price of the water is negotiated, and often differs for each transaction. Factors that effect the purchase price include the source of the water, the reliability of the water, the path the water must travel to get to the point of delivery, and the cost of alternative supplies.

Prices previously paid for water are included in the water acquisition summaries for fiscal years 1993 to 2001, which can be requested by calling 1-800-742-9474 and entering 26, or can be found on the WAP website at www.usbr.gov/mp/cvpia/wap.

9. WHAT IS THE PROCESS FOR THE WAP TO PURCHASE WATER?

The water acquisition process starts with identifying willing sellers, i.e., water districts or other entities with water rights that are willing to transfer their water rights (either temporarily or permanently) to Interior. Once a seller has come forward, the WAP requests a preliminary written proposal that includes sufficient information to evaluate the potential acquisition. Information that aids in evaluating the acquisition includes: water quantity, source, delivery schedule, duration of availability, water rights ownership, conveyance facilities, known environmental impacts related to the sale, and potential stakeholders.

If the acquisition is to be pursued, environmental considerations are addressed through compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act, Endangered Species Act, and other applicable environmental laws. The environmental documentation will include either an Environmental Assessment/Finding of No Significant Impact or an Environmental Impact Statement/Record of Decision. The draft environmental documents will be available for public review and comment. Throughout the water acquisition process, the public and interested parties have the opportunity to become involved in the process. The water acquisition process is complete when the environmental documentation is finalized and a water acquisition agreement/contract identifying the purchase price and conditions of sale/transfer is approved.

10. WHAT DO I NEED TO DO IF I AM INTERESTED IN SELLING WATER TO THE WAP?

Contact the WAP Program Manager at 916/978-5556 or TDD 916/978-5608, in writing at Bureau of Reclamation, WAP Program Manager, MP-410, Division of Resources Management, 2800 Cottage Way, Sacramento, California 95825-1898, or via e-mail at dmeier@mp.usbr.gov.

For additional information, visit the WAP website at www.usbr.gov/mp/cvpia/wap or call 1-800-742-9474 Ext. 26.